DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 347 465 CG 024 395

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TITLE Going Abstract: Teaching Research Concepts in Introductory Psychology.
PUB DATE Apr 92
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southwestern Psychological Association (38th, Austin, TX, April 16-18, 1992).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Instruction; College Students; *Counselor Training; Higher Education; *Introductory Courses; *Psychology; *Research Methodology; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

Examination of 21 recently published introductory psychology textbooks indicated that different topics were used in the examples illustrating experimental and correlational approaches to research. There are two problems inherent in this organization and presentation. First, students are exposed to research concepts before having any familiarity with the content areas of psychology and secondly, illustrations of the two basic research strategies are applied to different areas of psychology. It seems that application of different research strategies to the same topic would facilitate contrasts between the approaches. This introductory psychology course was organized into seven parts and research methods, concepts, and terms were presented during the class immediately following observational learning. The observational learning of aggression was selected as the topic to illustrate the different approaches to psychological research. Copies of two abstracts from published papers dealing with observational learning were distributed, one abstract representing an experimental approach and the other a correlational approach. In an evaluation of the class at the end of the semester, 13 students from a total of 30 who completed the evaluation responded "yes" to the question, "Do you think having the two abstracts about observational learning of aggression helped you to understand research terms and methods?" Although it is impossible to know if the affirmative responses reflected real understanding, introducing research concepts in this manner appears to be a way to which the students are receptive. (ABL)

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GOING ABSTRACT: TEACHING RESEARCH CONCEPTS IN INTRODUCTORY PSYCHOLOGY

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Text of poster presented in the CTUP Teaching Activities Exchange, held at the 38th annual meeting of the Southwestern Psychological Association, Austin, TX, April 15-18, 1992

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GOING ABSTRACT: TEACHING REACHING CONCEPTS IN INTRODUCTORY PSYCHOLOGY

Research methods, concepts, and terms typically are included in the first chapter of Introductory Psychology textbooks, usually with the history of psychology and areas of specialization within Psychology. In these research sections, experimental and correlational approaches are described and examples given. Examination of 21 recently-published textbooks indicated that, within each textbook, different topics were used in the examples illustrating experimental and correlational approaches to research (see Table 1). The topics used by Myers (1990) were the most similar, as both described studies of aggression.

There are two problems inherent in this organization and presentation. First, students are exposed to research concepts before having any familiarity with the content areas of psychology, and secondly, illustration of the two basic research strategies are applied to different areas of Psychology. It seems, a priori, that application of different research strategies to the same topic would facilitate contrasts between the approaches, including the relative advantages and disadvantages of these approaches. An attempt at rectifying these two problems is described here.

WHEN TO PRESENT RESEARCH CONCEPTS

The Introductory Psychology course was organized into seven 2-chapter parts, and research methods, concepts, and terms were included in the third part of the course (during

the fifth week of a 16-week course). In the first two parts of the course, students had been exposed to the content areas of Life-Span Psychology (chapters on Child, Adolescent, and Adult Development) and Biological Bases (chapters on the Central Nervous System and Sensation & Perception). The third part of the course dealt with Learning & Conditioning and Memory. Specifically, research methods, concepts, and terms were presented during the class that immediately followed coverage of observational learning. The observational learning of aggression was selected as the one topic with which to illustrate the different approaches to psychological research, as this topic has been used by several authors of introductory textbooks to illustrate either experimental or correlational research methods (Dworetzky, 1991; Kalat, 1990; Myers, 1990; Roediger, Capaldi, Paris, & Polivy, 1991).

WHAT IS PRESENTED

Copies of two abstracts from published papers dealing with observational learning of aggression were distributed (see Table 2). One abstract represented an experimental approach to the observational learning of aggression (e.g., Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963) and the other a correlational approach (e.g., Eron, 1963). As the different research terms were presented and explained (i.e., independent variable, dependent variable, control group, experimental group), their presence in the abstracts (and by extension, in the full studies) were noted and explained. Thus, direct comparisons

and contrasts between experimental and correlational approaches could be made, and in the process, students could see how different approaches to the same research problem or topic could be taken.

EVALUATION OF THE APPROACH

On the course evaluation done at the end of the semester, students were asked "Do you think having the two abstracts about observational learning of aggression helped you understand research terms and methods? Eighteen of the 30 students who completed the evaluation provided some answer, and 13 responded to the question with a succinct "yes." All responses are presented in Table 3.

Although it is impossible to truly know if the affirmative responses reflected real understanding, introducing research concepts in this manner appears to be a way to which the students are receptive.

AUTHOR NOTE

I thank James Patrick Egan and C. Laurel Franklin for extracting the relevant information from the Introductory Psychology textbooks, and Drs. K. W. Jacobs, G. S. Clack, and J. R. Matthews for having the textbooks available.

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Table 1: Textbooks Surveyed and Research Examples Used.

Textbook	Experimental Topic	Correlational Topic
Atkinson et al. (1990)	Marijuana and memory	Obesity and susceptibility to hypnosis
Benjamin et al. (1990)	Alcohol and judgment	Abused children and IQ
Bernstein et al. (1991)	Treatment of alcoholism and successful quitting	Personality similarity and dating enjoyment
Bootzin et al. (1991)	Exposure to cigarette smoke and cancer in rats	-Bad-tempered boys and later behavior -Divorce and emotional problems
Coon (1991)	Music while studying and test performance	-Parent and child IQ -Hours of sleep and anxiety
Crooks & Stein (1991)	Alcohol and sexual response	SAT's and GPA's
Darley et al. (1991)	Cigarette smoking and life spans (hypothetical exp.)	Personality similarity and marital satisfaction
Dworetzky (1991)	Viewing violence and amount of violence	Malaria and high ground
Gleitman (1991)	Imagery and recall	[None]
Gray (1991)	Treatments of depression and degree of depression	Parental discipline style and behavior of children
Huffman et al. (1991)	Rehearsal time and memory	Schizophrenia and identical twins
Kalat (1990)	Exposure to aggression and aggressive behavior	Familial alcoholism and alcohol abuse
Lefton (1991)	Sleep and reaction times	Emotional problems and children of broken homes
Morris (1990)	Sleep and attentiveness	Personality traits and success as a pilot
Myers (1990)	Clothing color (black) and aggressiveness in sports	TV violence and aggressive behavior
Ornstein et al. (1991)	-Psychotherapy and improvement -Situation and sexual attraction	High school and college grades

Table 1 (continued).

Textbook	Experimental Topic	Correlational Topic
Peterson (1991)	Brain lesions and behavior	Temperature and aggression
Rathus (1990)	Alcohol and aggression	Intelligence and school performance
Roediger et al. (1991)	TV and aggression	Height and weight
Santrock (1991)	Marijuana and attention	Stress and high blood pressure
Wade & Tavris (1990)	Nicotine and driving	Income, education, and dental problems

Table 2: Abstracts about observation of aggression

Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology
1963, Vol. 66, No. 1, 3–11

IMITATION OF FILM-MEDIATED AGGRESSIVE MODELS [1]

ALBERT BANDURA, DOROTHEA ROSS,[2] AND SHEILA A. ROSS

Stanford University

In a test of the hypothesis that exposure of children to film-mediated aggressive models would increase the probability of Ss' aggression to subsequent frustration, 1 group of experimental Ss observed real-life aggressive models, a 2nd observed these same models portraying aggression on film, while a 3rd group viewed a film depicting an aggressive cartoon character. Following the exposure treatment, Ss were mildly frustrated and tested for the amount of imitative and nonimitative aggression in a different experimental setting. The overall results provide evidence for both the facilitating and the modeling influence of film-mediated aggressive stimulation. In addition, the findings reveal that the effects of such exposure are to some extent a function of the sex of the model, sex of the child, and the reality cues of the model.

Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology
1963, Vol. 67, No. 2, 193–196

RELATIONSHIP OF TV VIEWING HABITS AND AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR IN CHILDREN [1]

LEONARD D. ERON [2]

Rip Van Winkle Foundation

Information about TV habits, (a) length of time watched and (b) extent of violence in favorite programs, was obtained from 689 mothers and 522 fathers in individual interviews having to do with the psychosocial antecedents of aggressive behavior in their children. This information was related to ratings of aggressive behavior of 3rd-grade children made by their peers. It was found that there was a significant positive relationship between the violence ratings of favorite programs as reported by both mothers and fathers and aggressive behavior of boys as rated in school. Also there was a significant negative relation between total time watched by boys as reported by mothers and aggressive behavior. The results for fathers' reports in this latter case were in the same direction, although not significant. No consistent relationships were noted between girls' TV habits as reported by either mother or father and aggression as rated in school by the peers.

Table 3: Students' responses on course evaluations.

Response	Frequency
Yes	13
Somewhat	1
Maybe	1
Not necessarily	1
I don't even know what that is	1
?	1